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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted of the expectations and perceived communication between field and supervisory personnel in the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service. Each agent in the sample completed a 209-item questionnaire dealing with his communication with his supervisor, and each supervisor completed ten such questionnaires for each of his ten field agents. This resulted in 200 questionnaires giving matching information about 100 pairs or dyads. Similarities and differences and agents' and supervisors' backgrounds are analyzed. Supervisors perceived less frequent overall communication than did the field agents. Field agents perceived significantly less communication about personal matters and new ideas than did their supervisors. Significantly more supervisors wanted more communication about the existing program. Field agents perceived significantly more of the communication that they received as being initiated by the supervisor. A high level of similarity of orientation between supervisors and field agents was found at both the agreement and accuracy levels. But between 1/3 and 1/2 of the dyads showed disagreement or misunderstanding. Similarity of orientation was found to be associated with dyadic satisfaction and interpersonal perceptions, but other factors contribute to these states. Implications of the study are discussed, and references are provided. (KM)

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COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ADMINISTRATIVE-PROGRAM STAFF AND FIELD STAFF IN THE MICHIGAN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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by

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Communication between Administrative-Program Staff and Field Staff in the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service

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"Does it matter whether I show interest in my Supervisor's family?"

"Is it whether you know the ropes or how well you do your job that is important around here?"

"Is it okay to leave the worrying to my boss?"

"Do agents stationed near Lansing get a better deal?"

"Should I take the initiative to bring up new ideas?"

"Do we agree about how much is enough?"

"How much should I poke my nose into what the field staff are doing?"

"Is there just one right way to do things in this organization?"

"Do I have to worry about seeing that things get done?"

"Does the other guy see things the way I do?"

This study was designed to seek some answers to questions such as these. Kornhauser (1962) in a monograph about scientists in industry summed up the critical issue as follows:

> ...the work establishment faces the dilemma of seeking too much integration of its professionals into the organization and thereby losing their professional worth, versus granting them too much autonomy and thereby weakening their contribution to the organization...

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The change agent in an extension agency presents a clear example of the problems alluded to by Kornhauswer and others. Traditionally the change agent role has involved interpreting and diffusing new technical information from the agency to the clients in an effort to improve some aspect of their life, developing and managing informal educational programs, or assisting local personnel in reaching and involving others in educational programs. Clearly, the emphasis is on communication to the client system. However, as noted above, there are links with other systems as well. Three distinct systems can be identified, and to be successful the agent must maintain adequate links with each. The principal systems and the communication foci are:

(i) The organization -- the contact that the agent has with his supervisor and others in coordinative and control positions.

(ii) The client system -- the communication that the agent has with the members of an identified client group.

(iii) The professional organization -- involvement with other professionals in the sharing and development of relevant technical information.

Given these three systems, Kornhauser (op cit) proposes four basic orientations that a professional agent can have. These are:

> ...professional orientation -- functional bureaucrat
> organizational orientation -- job bureaucrat
> professional and organizational orientation -- specialist
> client orientation -- service bureaucrat...

Depending on an individual's orientation, so he will tend to rate one or other orientation as the crucial one in his work.

In addition to these conflicting group memberships, there are a number of other differences in the role of a change agent as contrasted to that of a 'blue collar' worker. The one that is of prime concern is his output. The change agent's output is rarely quantifiable in the short term -- because at least in part, it will usually involve communication strategies that may not be reflected in behavioral changes for a considerable period of time. Also, the agent is rarely the only source of this assistance or information.

These differences between the change agent and the 'blue collar' worker, suggest that the change agent will be extremely dependent on communication, and also that he will have to maintain membership in markedly different dyads in the execution of his work. To concentrate on one role to the exclusion of the others would be to court disaster and to destroy the basic function of this liaison or linking position.

Given this context, this study was directed toward increasing our understanding of the expectations and perceived communication between field and supervisory personnel in this extension Service.

Method and Findings

The results of the study are presented in four main sections. First the characteristics of the sample; second, the major differences between supervisors and field staff in how they see the communication; third, the levels of similarity that were found; and fourth, the relationship between degree of similarity between pairs and the field agent's success and satisfaction. Throughout the study the focus was on the procedural aspects

of communication -- the rules (or norms) that relate to the communication process, and their expression in the communication between the supervisor/field agent pairs.

The study was conducted with personnel in the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service (MCES). This organization has been described in some detail by Jain (1970) and Amend (1971), and in the pamphlet entitled 'A Career with the Cooperative Extension Service of Michigan State University.'

The following extensive quote from this pamphlet outlines the principal aspects of direct concern to this proposed study:

> ...program organization. The Director of Extension is in charge of all programs, personnel, finances, and operations of the Cooperative Extension Service. The staff consists of more than 400 professionals.
>
> Five program directors are responsible for guiding programs in Agriculture, Natural Resources, Marketing, 4-H Youth, and Family Living Education. Some program areas have program leaders to assist the program directors.
>
> Three assistant field operations directors are also responsible to the Director of Extension. They counsel with county and district personnel, coordinate joint program efforts, meet with committees of county boards of supervisors, handle special problems, etc.
>
> Supervisory teams are under the chairmanship of the extension assistant field operations directors. Other team members consist of representatives of the five program areas. These teams are responsible for supervising all Extension personnel in their assigned geographical area.
>
> Extension programs are carried to the people in Michigan's 83 counties through county Extension offices. A County Extension Director is in charge of each office. Agents are assigned on a county, multi-county, area or district basis.
>
> Other functions at the state level include subject matter specialists who are grouped in departments on the MSU campus. Specialists are charged to provide current technical information for field agents. They also help plan and conduct county Extension programs...

The five program leaders, two assistant program leaders and the three assistant field operations directiors were chosen as the supervisors for the study. Ten groups, each of ten field agents, were then drawn at random from those agents with some direct responsibility to each supervisor. This gave one hundred pairs (or dyads), with agents from 63 of the 82 counties in Michigan.

Each agent, in the sample, completed a 209 item questionnaire dealing with his communication with the nominated supervisor; while each supervisor completed ten such questionnaires -- one for each of the ten nominated field agents. We thus collected two hundred questionnaires which gave matching information about one hundred different interactions. Only two agents who were selected for the study were unable to complete the questionnaires, and they were replaced with other personnel in that supervisor's direct contacts.

The sample included agents dealing with both rural and urban problems, and with a considerable range in their proximity to the nominated supervisors. The median distance between field agent and supervisor centers was 97 miles, with a range from less than 20 miles to over 500 miles. All of the supervisors had a Masters or Doctoral degree, while approximately two thirds of the field agents had Masters degrees and the remaining one third had less than a Masters degree.

In general, the field agents and their supervisors had highly similar backgrounds in extension. A similarity of background index was developed, based on age, time in current position and years in extension service. The index had a possible range from 4 to 15, with a score of 15 representing complete similarity. Over half (58%) of the sample had scores of 12 or higher.

Exactly half of the field agents had worked for less than five years under their supervisor's direct authority and half for five years or more. Fourteen percent reported less than two years working under the particular supervisor.

The field agents were generally highly satisfied with their role achievement; and equally, the supervisors tended to be highly satisfied with the performance of the field agents. Both field agents and supervisors viewed their relationships as more formal and more business-like than personal and social.

Percentage salary increases were calculated for each field agent. These were based on the increase of July 1971 salaries over those of July 1968.* The percentage salary increases ranged from 9 to 51 percent, with a mean increase over the three years of 24 percent.

The field agents' level of education and the similarity of their background in extension to that of their supervisor were both significantly** associated with their length of interaction with the supervisor. This would seem to be a result of a common dependence on time. Those who have been in the service for more than six years inevitably will have had a long interaction with the particular supervisor and will have had a

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* 11 agents had been in the Service for less than 3 years and they had their actual percentage increase adjusted by a factor based on the mean percentage increases granted to personnel in their program area over the other years.

** Statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

longer time within which to have completed a Masters degree. Similarity of background is also significantly associated with the distance between centers. This suggests that personnel are promoted to counties closer to the supervisory centers.

(i) Supervisor and field agent perceptions of their communication.

The major differences in perceptions of communication are shown in Table 1. Supervisors perceived less frequent overall communication than did the field agents; although, field agents perceived significantly less communication about personal matters and new ideas than their supervisors did. Overall the supervisors were less satisfied with the amount of communication than were their field agents and in particular significantly more supervisors wanted more communication about the existing program. Field agents perceived significantly more of the communication that they received as being imposed by supervisors, rather than being sought by them. Similarly, the field agents also perceived significantly more of the communication, coming from their supervisors, as relating to getting the job done (the existing program) rather than relating to personal matters and new ideas.

These perceptions suggest that the field agents view their supervisory communication in a narrower and less central way than do their supervisors. Given their different roles within the organization this difference would seem understandable. The prime role of the field agents is to communicate with their clients and various county officials, and supervisory communication essentially fills a support of facilitating function for them. - On the other hand, for the supervisors their communi-

Table 1. Supervisor/field agent differences in perceptions of communication.

Communication dimension	Supervisors %	Field agents %	χ^2	Significance
Initiation				
supervisor initiates	20	26		
field agents initiate	11	15	2.18	
both about equally	69	59	df=2	N.S.
Mode				
more written	16	17		
1/2 and 1/2	49	35	4.40	
more oral	35	48	df=2	N.S.
Frequency				
once a week or more	6	15		
once a month or more	47	54	7.62	
less often	47	31	df=2	$p < .05$
Satisfaction with amount				
satisfied[1]	25	47	9.57*	
like more	75	53	df=1	$p < .01$
Sequencing of communication to field agents				
more directed by supervisors	17	39		
1/2 and 1/2	59	48	13.04	
more sought by field agents	24	13	df=2	$p < .001$
Sequencing of communication to supervisors				
more directed by field staff	31	31		
1/2 and 1/2	54	50	0.62	
more sought by supervisors	15	19	df=2	N.S.
Percentage of supervisor initiated communication about the existing program				
0-40%	51	23		
41-60%	29	37	18.23	$p < .001$
61-100%	20	40	df=2	

*Yates correction applied

[1]includes one field agent who would like less communication

Table 1, (cont'd.)

Communication dimension	Supervisors %	Field agents %	X^2	Significance
Percentage of field agent initiated communication about the existing program				
0-40%	51	40		
41-60%	29	31	3.05	
61-100%	20	29	df=2	N.S.
Initiation about the existing program				
supervisor initiates	23	20		
field agent initiates	12	15		
both about equally	64	62	1.57	
don't communicate about existing	1	3	df=3	N.S.
Frequency of communication about the existing program				
once a month or more	46	39	0.74*	
less often[2]	54	61	df=1	N.S.
Satisfaction[3] with communication about the existing program				
would like more	68	50	5.68*	
satisfied	31	48	df=1	$p < .05$
Initiation about personal matters				
supervisor initiates	16	11		
field agent initiates	16	24		
both about equally	56	57	3.33	
don't communicate about personal	12	8	df=3	N.S.
Frequency of communication about personal matters				
once a month or more	20	9	4.03*	
less often[2]	80	91	df=1	$p < .05$

*Yates correction applied
[2]includes those who don't communicate
[3]excludes those who don't communicate

Table 1, (cont'd.)

Communication dimension	Supervisors %	Field agents %	X^2	Significance
Satisfaction[3] with communication about personal matters				
would like more	20	16	0.55*	
satisfied[1]	68	77	df=1	N.S.
Initiation about new ideas				
supervisor initiates	19	6		
field agent initiates	19	36	14.24	
both about equally	61	54	df=3	$p < .01$
don't communicate about new ideas	1	4		
Frequency of communication about new ideas				
once a month or more	38	22	5.36*	
less often[2]	62	78	df=1	$p < .05$
Satisfaction[3] with communication about new ideas				
would like more	75	62	2.40*	
satisfied	24	34	df=1	N.S.

*Yates correction applied
[1]includes one supervisor who would like less communication
[2]includes those who don't communicate
[3]excludes those who don't communicate

cation with the field agents represents a much more central aspect of their work. These differences suggest that the field agents generally do not feel cut off from their organization; and that any effort on the part of supervisors to increase communication may be seen by many field agents as undesirable overload. The one major exception is communication about new ideas. Two thirds or more of both supervisors and field staff would like to have more communication about new ideas. Given that the prime purpose of the organization is to introduce new ideas to the people of Michigan, the generation, discussion and sharing of new ideas would seem to be one area where increased supervisory communication and supportive rules would increase satisfaction and enhance performance.

Approximately two-thirds of both the field agents and their supervisors reported discussing new ideas together less than once a month. This would seem to be far below the optimum for an organization where change is meant to be the prime focus. Such a lack of searching for and discussing new ideas suggests an unfortunate level of complacency, or misdirected emphasis in professional interaction. Steps to increase the searching and sharing of new ideas would seem very desirable.

One way to achieve such an increase in the sharing of new ideas would be for those in supervisory roles to act as facilitators -- taking ideas from center to center.

Using a factor analysis of sixty items relating to the procedural rules of communication, four independent dimensions of communication were identified. These dimensions focus on different aspects of sharing, or interdependence, in the dyad -- new ideas, family and personal activities, the

responsibility for seeing tasks through to completion, and the responsibility for seeing that the tasks are in fact undertaken. These four dimensions, called innovation, maintenance, sequencing and initiation respectively, are used in most of the subsequent discussion to distinguish between different aspects of communication. The items that were retained are shown in Table 2.

When the four dimensions of procedural communication are taken together the supervisors as a group are seen to advocate more interdependent communication than do the field agents. This ties in with their view of the communication as being less imposed and less production oriented than it is seen by the field agents. Supervisors also attributed more interdependence to the field agents' perceptions of innovative communication. Taken together, these tendencies to advocate and see more highly interdependent communication procedures appear to represent an important difference between supervisors and their field agents.

Two possible interpretations can be offered to explain this trend. First, it may be a reflection of their greater involvement due to the centrality of this interaction to their roles. On the other hand, it may represent a basic difference in philosophy of supervision. If in fact, supervisors do advocate more interdependent communication because of a more 'human resource' or 'human relations' philosophy, then the seeds may be developing for a coorientation gap based on different rules of what is appropriate procedural communication.

Table 2. Items selected for communication indices

Index	Item
Innovation	Share tentative new ideas with supervisor
	Develop new programs through frequent interaction with supervisor
	Consider modifying new programs to fit into local conditions.
	Seek involvement in setting priorities for new programs
	Contact his supervisor about new ideas whenever he comes across them
	Talk over new ideas with supervisor before submitting a proposal
	Take the initiative to seek out new ideas to raise with his supervisor
	Submit new ideas or proposals in writing to his supervisor
Maintenance	Concern himself with the activities of his supervisor's family
	Offer suggestions about his supervisor's personal affairs
	Enquire about his supervisor's family when together
	Avoid bringing personal affairs into conversations with supervisor
	Make a point of introducing personal affairs into discussions
	Refer to his family's activities in conversations with his supervisor
	Include personal news in memoranda to his supervisor
	Feel free to discuss personal matters over the phone
Sequencing	Keep reminding his supervisor of unresolved issues
	Be prepared to offer criticism of his supervisor's ideas for the agent's advancement
	Clarify ambiguous memoranda from his supervisor with him
	If he is not satisfied with the work that he has been assigned to, then 'grit his teeth and bear it' rather than complain
	Hesitate to question an assignment that is personally inconvenient
Initiation	Send in reports of current projects even when not requested
	Leave it to his supervisor to suggest new programs
	Wait for supervisor to request any reports that he wants
	Leave it to his supervisor to suggest possible courses for personal advancement

(ii) Actual levels of coorientational similarity between supervisors and field agents.

The levels of achieved similarity are presented in Table 3. The outstanding overall feature is the high level of similarity on all communication dimensions at both the agreement and accuracy levels. Another major feature is the stability of both the means and standard deviations for a particular communication dimension over the three measures -- actual perceptions, field agent predictions of supervisor perceptions, and supervisor predictions of field agent perceptions.

Also, despite the limited amount of communication between the dyad members, and some differences in experience and educational background, this study shows that almost all of the dyads in the sample were able to achieve a high level of agreement. Perhaps the most important reason for such a result is the great similarity in basic type and level of education and prior experience. The results seem to indicate that common types of experience and background were much more important in this case than the pressures toward disintegration that are proposed by Kaufman (1960). A major implication that follows is that geographic separation need not lead to serious problems of dissimilar orientations provided that the organization is relatively stable and the members share highly similar background experiences.

By and large, both the field agents and their supervisors seem to have come from the same mold -- to have attended similar mid-West colleges, to have similar views on the philosophy and place of extension, and to have similar interests and views. Deviant views in general were usually

Table 3. Summary of dyadic agreement and accuracy scores.

Focus	Index	Maximum range	Mean	S.D.	Adjusted mean[1]
Agreement on rules	Innovation	8-41[2]	37.09	2.70	88.1
	Maintenance	8-41	35.31	4.31	82.7
	Sequencing	5-26	22.22	2.66	82.0
	Initiation	4-21	18.10	2.17	82.9
Agreement on actual communication	Innovation	8-33	30.14	2.64	88.5
	Maintenance	8-33	29.41	2.85	85.6
	Sequencing	5-21	18.66	1.93	85.3
	Initiation	4-17	15.20	1.44	86.1
Field agent accuracy in predicting supervisor responses	Innovation	8-33	30.39	2.26	89.5
	Maintenance	8-33	29.54	2.70	86.1
	Sequencing	5-21	18.91	1.78	86.9
	Initiation	4-17	15.23	1.33	86.3
Supervisor accuracy in predicting field agent responses	Innovation	8-33	30.06	2.39	88.2
	Maintenance	8-33	29.57	2.64	86.2
	Sequencing	5-21	18.87	1.97	86.6
	Initiation	4-17	15.28	1.36	86.7

[1]Means transformed to their positions on a range from 0-100.

[2]Higher scores represent greater similarity of orientation.

criticized and those who 'rocked the boat' received considerable opposition. Many respondents expressed concern about participation in the study because of a fear of reprisal, and several reported unfortunate previous incidents where 'confidential' information was released. All of this would seem to point to considerable rigidity in approach and to an unfortunately high level of 'back biting.'

Conformity does appear to be rewarded, and probably almost all who stay in the organization have had to adopt the 'correct' way of doing things. Again, in an organization of the size of the NCES and one associated with the principles of a University, some freeing of the system to meet new and unknown needs would seem to be needed.

While the overall feature is one of high similarity and understanding, the combination of agreement and accuracy scores for each dyad, reveals some cause for concern. Using Scheff's (1967) combination of high and low levels of agreement and accuracy to yield four types of understanding, it was found that both supervisors and field agents tended to predict that the other member of their dyad would share their particular view of the communication interaction, see Table 4. This trend is similar to that reported by Berlo et al (1971, a and b). Given high levels of agreement, this feature means a high level of understanding -- the members of the dyads agree and know it. However, to the extent that responses in the low agreement cells indicate real differences in orientation, then a significant number of dyads actually have low agreement while they think that they have high agreement -- this is the type of understanding that Scheff calls false consensus.

Table 4. Combination of agreement and accuracy about the actual communication.

Index	Level	Agreement	Accuracy Low	Accuracy High	X^2 [1] yc	Significance
Innovation	Field agents	High	9	61	18.73	***
		Low	17	13		
	Supervisors	High	16	54	18.05	***
		Low	21	9		
Maintenance	Field agents	High	7	59	37.99	***
		Low	25	9		
	Supervisors	High	3	63	56.38	***
		Low	27	7		
Sequencing	Field agents	High	20	59	16.49	***
		Low	16	5		
	Supervisors	High	17	62	16.77	***
		Low	15	6		
Initiation	Field agents	High	7	65	20.10	***
		Low	15	13		
	Supervisors	High	9	63	16.46	***
		Low	15	13		

[1]Yates correction applied
***Significant at the < 0.001 level

While over half of the responses indicated high agreement and high accuracy -- the pairs agreed and accurately predicted that the other member would share their view -- between one third and one half of the responses show disagreement or misunderstanding.

It is this group that gives cause for concern. Certainly the organization should not claim nor assume that everyone shares the same idea about how agents and supervisors communicate. In at least one third of the pairs that were studied, one or other of the members suffered from some type of misunderstanding about the communication.

This need not always be undesirable provided that it is known and taken into account; but if not, it will almost certainly contribute to communication breakdowns and strained relationships. With the rotation of some supervisors from one group of field agents to another, different expectations do occur and field agents then go through a period of 'trying to psych out' what the new supervisor will want and how he would like things done. Such uncertainty must be dysfunctional to the organization, and informally it seemed to contribute to considerable lack of morale in individual cases.

As noted earlier, false consensus was the most prevalent type of misunderstanding. This state of misunderatanding would seem to be particularly undesirable for most systems. Whereas, with dissensus the members disagree and are aware of their disagreement, with false consensus the members think that they understand the other's orientation but do not. False consensus may thus mask differences and encourage the developement of even lower agreement.

As both supervisors and field agents were equally likely to make this type of wrong judgment, some form of explicit feedback on the procedural aspects of communication would seem highly desirable. This feedback would hopefully serve as a check on whether the agreement that the members perceive is based on actual agreement or instead on a false extrapolation of each individual's particular point of view.

Another reason for suggesting such an explicit discussion of procedural aspects of communication, is the tendency for dyads in which the supervisor holds different views, to those of other supervisors, to have low agreement, as shown in Table 5. This could be a result of field staff viewing the interaction as they expect it should occur rather than being aware of its unique features; or equally, it could indicate a lack of awareness by the supervisors of the actual interaction. In either case, explicit feedback on views of the interaction would clarify the situation and that should lead to greater understanding.

Given this difference in ability between supervisors and field staff in predicting unusual views, it would seem that the supervisory staff have less difficulty than their field staff in treating each dyad as a unique system. This may well be another reflection of a basic difference in centrality of this communication to their perceived roles.

(iii) Relationship betwee level of understanding and interpersonal attraction

The major purpose of the study was to test two extensions of Newcomb's (1953) coorientation model. These extensions were: first, that increased similarity of orientation would lead to greater interpersonal

Table 5. Effect of deviation from mean group perceptions.

Index	Group	Centrality	Agreement Low	Agreement High	X^2 [1] yc	Significance
Innovation	Field agents	Central	25	59	0.03	N.S.
		Deviant	5	11		
	Supervisors	Central	14	64	21.98	***
		Deviant	16	6		
Maintenance	Field agents	Central	26	53	0.03	N.S.
		Deviant	8	13		
	Supervisors	Central	15	57	17.82	***
		Deviant	19	9		
Sequencing	Field agents	Central	9	64	10.39	**
		Deviant	12	15		
	Supervisors	Central	11	68	9.41	**
		Deviant	10	11		
Initiation	Field agents	Central	25	65	0.20	N.S.
		Deviant	3	13		
	Supervisors	Central	16	65	12.31	***
		Deviant	12	7		

[1] Yates correction applied
**Significant at the $p \leq .01$ level
***Significant at the $p \leq .001$ level

attraction, and second, that attraction would be determined by the net effect of coorientations within the dyad. Both hypotheses suggest that increased understanding should be associated with increased interpersonal attraction. The first seeks to establish one to one relationships, while the second suggests that the level of attraction will be a reflection of the combined effects of many different orientations within the dyad. For objects of orientation of high instrumentality to the relationship both hypotheses should allow a more precise estimate of attraction than could be obtained by considering individual orientations one by one.

Similarity of orientations toward the procedural aspects of communication do in fact seem to contribute to the supervisors' evaluations of the system. More similar orientations are associated with better evaluations and more social and informal views of the relationship. A consideration of partial correlation coefficients give added support to this conclusion, as they show that the associations occur over and above any influence of such factors as similarity of background or geographic separation, and so on. However, despite statistical significance, the individual correlations only explain a very small proportion of the variance in the interpersonal attraction.

These results suggest that while coorientation toward some aspects of procedural communication is associated with dyadic satisfaction and interpersonal perceptions, that many other factors are also contributing to these states.

In particular, no significant correlations were found between any of the dimensions of similarity and percentage salary increase. This occurred in spite of an expectation that at least some part of salary increment would be a reflection of the relationship between the supervisor and the field agent. There could be at least two reasons for this lack of association. First, several people are involved in making the recommendation and decision about salary increases for a particular agent, and the particular supervisor nominated for this study may only have a minor input. Second, other factors such as actual performance as a change agent, promotion or correction of prior inequities will almost certainly have important influences on salary increases that are granted, and these may have masked any communication effects.

If a systems viewpoint is taken, the lack of association between similarity of orientations toward communication and salary increase would seem to indicate a healthy state. If there was a strong association, that would indicate that 'knowing the ropes' was more important than actual job performance!

Similarity of orientation in terms of accuracy and agreement about the actual dyadic interaction was more strongly associated with the satisfaction measures than was similarity towards the ideal rules of supervisory communication. This does not seem to be an artifact of greater variance or differing means. Instead it indicates that, at least for this organization, the acutal communication is more important and more instrumental than the ideal rules.

One finding that is difficult to interpret, is a consistent negative association between similarity of orientation toward maintenance aspects of communication and the various measures of attraction and satisfaction. It is difficult to see why increased agreement and/or accuracy about how much to share personal and family matters with the other member of the dyad should lead to less satisfaction and more formal impressions of the relationship.

One possible explanation may be that both field and supervisory staff feel that they ought to talk about non-work matters, such as each other's family life, but that they in fact do not feel comfortable disclosing these aspects to a person that they define in a work relationship. If people are disclosing more of their personal or intimate selves than they feel comfortable with, then it could be argued that this would lead to dissonance and ultimately to a more strained relationship.

Again, if this is the case, if non-threatening situations could be set up to discuss communication procedures, it may well be discovered that both field and supervisory staff may be happier to make a clear distinction between their professional and personal lives. Both groups may be involving themselves in each other's personal lives simply because they think they should, rather than because they want this sort of involvement.

Although the multiple correlation coefficients (R) were consistently larger than the zero order or partial correlation coefficients for individual items (r), these differences were generally not statistically significant. The hypothesis was not supported in relation to the field agent aspects of the relationship nor for salary increase, but the net

effect of combining all the dimensions did allow more accuracy in predicting how the supervisors would rate the field agent and how formal they would see the relationship. However, only one third or less of the variance is explained by the combination of similarity scores. Therefore, considerable influence on field agent satisfaction and salary increase in particular, and all the system measures to a large degree, must be coming from other factors in the system.

Reducing the number of variables through a least squares delete program identifies a more limited set of measures that contribute the major part of the explanation. However, there is no clear subset of instrumental dimensions that are important for all of the measures of interpersonal attraction. This suggests that the five measures of attraction -- field agent role satisfaction, field agent perceptions of the formality of the relationship, percentage salary increase, field agent evaluation by supervisors and supervisor perceptions of the formality of the relationship -- have little isomorphism.

All of these measures were included because it seemed reasonable to expect that they would be affected by the degree of liking or attraction between the members of each dyad. The results suggest that each is also affected by many other factors within the system.

The associations that were found, and the overall gross association, between level of coorientational similarity and attraction, suggest that coorientation of members of supervisory dyads toward communication procedures in their interaction will be an important contributor to their satisfaction but NOT the sole or even the major determinant in systems like the MCES.

The system relationships may well be considerably more complex than those suggested in the hypotheses. Different aspects of procedural communication seem to be linked with different aspects of dyadic attraction, and many other aspects of the system are almost certainly operating at the same time to help to determine such states as role satisfaction or salary increase.

Overall implications

This study was undertaken to determine the levels of coorientational similarity between members of an extension service; and to assess the effect of differing levels of similarity on the integration and success of the agents in the field.

Earlier we suggested that some field agents may be penalized for not 'knowing the ropes.' From the sample that we studied, we can conclude that this does not constitute a major problem for the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service at this time. There was what appears to be a high degree of agreement between the supervisor/field agent pairs, and they held accurate perceptions of each other's views.

Nevertheless, some support was found for the hypothesized association between level of similarity toward communication procedures and the relationship between the dyad members. While this association appears to be mediated by other aspects of the system, it does indicate one area where issues not directly related to job performance were influencing the evaluation and the satisfaction of the field agents.

If we accept this association, then it would seem desirable to commit some time and energy to increasing mutual understanding of communication procedures. We have suggested that such a commitment might take the form of explicit discussion of expectations and individual orientations.

At this stage, we have little evidence of how important these differences might be in other organizations. However, if we accept the predictions of such people as Toffler (1970), that organizations and their components will become increasingly short lived with a changing structure built on highly transitory human relationships, then the issue may become critical. If relationships change more rapidly, then differences may become the order of the day and more and more people may get hurt through misunderstanding the communication rules. Such an outcome would seem untenable.

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Further reading

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